

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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June 23, 2008

Anthony Curzi
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning
320 West Temple Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90012

Quest Ranch NOP Comments
Tentative Tract Map No. 068737
SCH No. 2008051037

Dear Mr. Curzi:

The subject 47.2 acre property represents a northern extension of an approximately 2,000-acre core habitat area that is not bisected by a paved road and is located between Old Topanga Canyon Road and Topanga Canyon Boulevard (SR 27). The north-slope property is also heavily wooded, contains numerous ecotones, and variable topography including one significant drainage course. As a result the property could harbor any non-aquatic dependent species found in the Santa Monica Mountains other than ring-tailed cats. Currently human disturbance is concentrated in the northeast corner of the property. To provide an adequate level of biological resource protection, the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) must include at least two feasible development alternatives that limit development to the northern one third of the site.

The subject property is one of a few key private properties, along with one City of Calabasas-owned property, the comprises the high quality natural viewshed on the portion of SR 27 between the Top of Topanga Overlook and Woodland Hills. The proposed project is a mass graded project that alters approximately two-thirds of the site including filling a quite significant drainage. In short the proposed project and any closely related project alternative would result unavoidable significant adverse visual impacts to a scenic State route in a National Recreation Area. How can the County adopt a statement of overriding considerations for an estate residential project with numerous significant unavoidable adverse visual and ecological impacts?

The Conservancy puts forth the attached limits of grading for an alternative DEIR project that works with the landforms and major clusters of native oak and walnut trees. One house would take access from the proposed upper entrance on Topanga Canyon Boulevard and the remainder from the proposed entrance. The alternative also includes a public trail through the easternmost section of the property where it would not interfere with privacy.

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Please address any future documents to the attention of Paul Edelman at the letterhead address and questions to him at (310) 589-3200 ext. 128.

Sincerely,

RONALD P. SCHAFER
Chairperson